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290643Z Dec 05

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SUBJECT: Jordan: U.S. Proposal on Seismic Monitoring Station

Ref: State 229417

1. Summary: Econ Counselor and ESTH Officer presented reftel draft agreement and talking points on a proposed agreement for a bilateral seismic monitoring station in Jordan to Natural Resources Authority Director General Dr. Maher Hijazin on December 27. Dr. Hijazin was pleased to receive the proposal, and promised to forward the agreement for review and appraisal immediately. Other GOJ key elements have yet to review the proposal. End summary.

2. Dr. Hijazin said that the Natural Resources Authority, which is under the Energy Ministry and has responsibility for seismic issues, has been trying to upgrade its "outdated" seismology network. Its recent proposal for half a million dollars for this purpose was cut from the budget, he said. Reftel proposal thus comes at the "perfect time," Hijazin said, and is "welcome, definitely."

3. Hijazin said he would forward the draft agreement to technical specialists within the Natural Resources Authority and to legal advisors for evaluation and review. The agreement would then have to be cleared by the Board of the Natural Resources Authority, which is chaired by the Minister of Energy. The next and final step would be approval by the Cabinet. [Comment: In post's assessment, the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF), and possibly the Foreign Ministry, may need to engage before this measure moves to the Cabinet if it is to succeed. End Comment.] Hijazin said the NRA would meet internally next week to discuss the proposal. He did not comment on how long it would take for the Board to reach a decision, but he implied that it would not be long. He believed that Cabinet approval would be routine, and that the request for approval would be submitted to the Cabinet as soon as one week after the NRA Board's approval. [Comment: Further interagency coordination will likely be needed with the MFA and the JAF which could extend the timeframe. End Comment.]

4. The only two issues raised by Dr. Hijazin were Jordan's need for access to the data, and their inability to contribute financially. Personnel support and infrastructure for the project were "no problem," he said, but Jordan "cannot contribute" to hardware purchases because "money is tight." Econ Counselor reassured him that under the draft agreement, data is shared "without restriction," and that hardware and software costs will be borne by the US.

5. Embassy will separately deliver the draft agreement by diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well.

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